

paying these taxes that we want to know where \$17.3 billion has gone.

I have just a couple of more points, and then I will yield back my time. I am one of many, both Republican and Democrats, who work here very hard. We heard, the hour before my time, in talking about housing. There are just a lot of responsibilities that we do have to the taxpayers of this country to make sure that the government does operate in a very efficient manner, and where we can be of assistance to the people throughout this country, we certainly need to meet that obligation. Again, the May 2002 report from the Department of Treasury, 2001 financial report of the United States Government, anybody that might be listening tonight or anybody that would like to check can go on the Internet and look up that document, 2001 financial report of the United States Government, look on page 110. And I am going to repeat it again, the Federal Government has, and I quote, unreconciled transactions totaling \$17.3 billion.

Just a quick example. According to the London Times, \$17.3 billion is enough to buy a fleet of B-2 bombers with spare change for fuel. \$17.3 billion is the equivalent of two aircraft carriers and two air wings. We all know that if this money, if it had just been \$200 that might have been lost by a company, the company president would have immediately called the CPA and said, "Come in here and check the books of this company. I don't know where we have lost this money." Then if he could not find it, he might even call the local police and ask them to come in to help investigate.

I want to say again that I am certain that Secretary O'Neill will answer my letter and give me an explanation so I can say to the taxpayers of the Third District of North Carolina as well as the taxpayers of America that we know where this \$17.3 billion has gone.

Mr. Speaker, again, I want to thank you for this time and just to say that I will promise the people of the Third District of North Carolina and the people of America that I will work with my colleagues on both sides of the political aisle and make sure that we get an explanation as to where the \$17.3 billion has gone; that we appreciate the hard-working people of America, and we want to make sure that even though we have many contentious and heated debates, and that is the way it should be, this is a Republic, it is a democratic country, and we have a right to disagree, but when it really comes down to trying to protect the taxpayers' money, we work together in a bipartisan way.

Therefore, if I have not gotten an answer when we come back after July 4, I will be asking the committees of jurisdiction to please request that Secretary O'Neill comes before the committee and explains where this \$17.3 billion has gone.

I conclude tonight, Mr. Speaker, because I have three military bases in my

district, Camp Lejeune Marine Base, Cherry Point Marine Station and Seymour Johnson Air Force Base.

I certainly want to close by asking God to please bless our men and women in uniform and their families. We are very fortunate to have the dedicated men and women in uniform as well as their families.

INTRODUCTION OF RESOLUTION PRAISING CUBA'S PROJECT VARELA

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. PALLONE) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. PALLONE. Mr. Speaker, I rise this evening to draw attention to a troubling development in the democratic reform effort in Cuba. Last week Fidel Castro staged mass demonstrations throughout Cuba in a sign of so-called "support" for a proposed amendment to the Cuban Constitution declaring his failed Soviet-style economic system to be "untouchable."

Mr. Speaker, there is no question as to what has left Castro feeling threatened to the point that he feels the need to reaffirm his dictatorial control of Cuba and that is Project Varela. On Friday, May 10, over 11,000 citizens of Cuba took a courageous stand and petitioned the Cuban National Assembly to hold a nationwide referendum vote on guarantees of human rights and civil liberties.

Named for the 19th century priest and Cuban independence hero, Padre Felix Varela, the Varela Project received no funding or support from foreign organizations or foreign governments. Project Varela is a grassroots effort by the Cuban people to call on their government to provide them with internationally accepted standards of human and civil rights, including freedom of speech, the right to own a business, electoral reform and amnesty for political prisoners.

Beyond the obvious threat that a grassroots political effort poses, Project Varela represents an even greater challenge to Castro's control of the island. With its 11,000 plus signatures, the project qualifies under article 88 of the Cuban Constitution, which states that if the Cuban National Assembly receives the verified signatures of 10,000 legal voters, a referendum on the issue should be scheduled. However, Mr. Speaker, instead of allowing his Parliament to consider Project Varela, today Castro introduced his own referendum that would stop future consideration of Project Varela and any other democratic reform efforts.

My question to Castro is that if he is so sure that he has the support of the Cuban people, why will he not schedule a referendum? If Castro is unfazed by the Varela Project, then why propose reforms to the Cuban Constitution 1 month to the day that the petition was delivered?

Mr. Speaker, the ultimate goal of U.S. policy towards Cuba has always

been to promote the island's peaceful transition to democracy. Many of my colleagues have varying views on the best approach to achieve a democracy. However, we can all agree on the importance of a grassroots democratic effort like Project Varela. That is why today I have introduced a resolution commending the citizens of Cuba for actively exercising their constitutional rights and taking a stand for the rights of all Cubans. The resolution praises Oswaldo Paya and the other organizers of Project Varela for their courage and bravery, for their willingness to stand up to a dictator.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to join with me and cosponsor this important resolution. It is time Castro realized that his orchestrated demonstrations and forced petitions are fooling no one.

LEAVE OF ABSENCE

By unanimous consent, leave of absence was granted to:

Mr. CHAMBLISS (at the request of Mr. ARMEY) for today until 1:30 p.m. on account of qualifying for the Georgia congressional ballot.

Mr. ISAKSON (at the request of Mr. ARMEY) for today until 1:30 p.m. on account of qualifying for the Georgia congressional ballot.

Mr. KINGSTON (at the request of Mr. ARMEY) for today until 1:30 p.m. on account of qualifying for the Georgia congressional ballot.

Mr. LAHOOD (at the request of Mr. ARMEY) for June 21 on account of official business.

Mr. MANZULLO (at the request of Mr. ARMEY) for today after 2:00 p.m. through June 24 on account of personal business.

Mrs. ROUKEMA (at the request of Mr. ARMEY) for June 19 and the balance of the week on account of illness.

SPECIAL ORDERS GRANTED

By unanimous consent, permission to address the House, following the legislative program and any special orders heretofore entered, was granted to:

(The following Members (at the request of Mr. McNULTY) to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material:)

Mr. GEORGE MILLER of California, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. PAYNE, for 5 minutes, today.

Ms. KAPTUR, for 5 minutes, today.

Ms. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON of Texas, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. PALLONE, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. CUMMINGS, for 5 minutes, today.

Ms. BROWN of Florida, for 5 minutes, today.

Ms. NORTON, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. MEEKS of New York, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. CONYERS, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. DAVIS of Illinois, for 5 minutes, today.

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas, for 5 minutes, today.